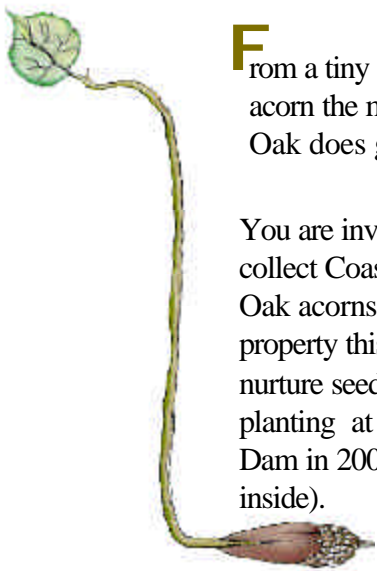


UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
2800 COTTAGE WAY
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95825-1898



From a tiny
acorn the mighty
Oak does grow...

You are invited to
collect Coast Live
Oak acorns on your
property this fall and
nurture seedlings for
planting at Casitas
Dam in 2001 (details
inside).

Casitas Dam Activities

- Restoration Program Public Meeting - October 26
- Project Tours on request
- Construction Wrap-up Press Conference (TBA)

Casitas Dam Update

Issue #6
September 19, 2000

Public Affairs Office
Bureau of Reclamation

This newsletter is designed to keep neighbors of Casitas Dam informed about construction and related issues. It will be published as needed throughout the project.

When you have questions regarding the status of work at the dam, truck traffic, or other concerns, please contact us:

*Our new Information
Number is 916/978-5105*

*Our New Website:
www.mp.usbr.gov/casitas*

Casitas Dam Upgrade Nears Completion

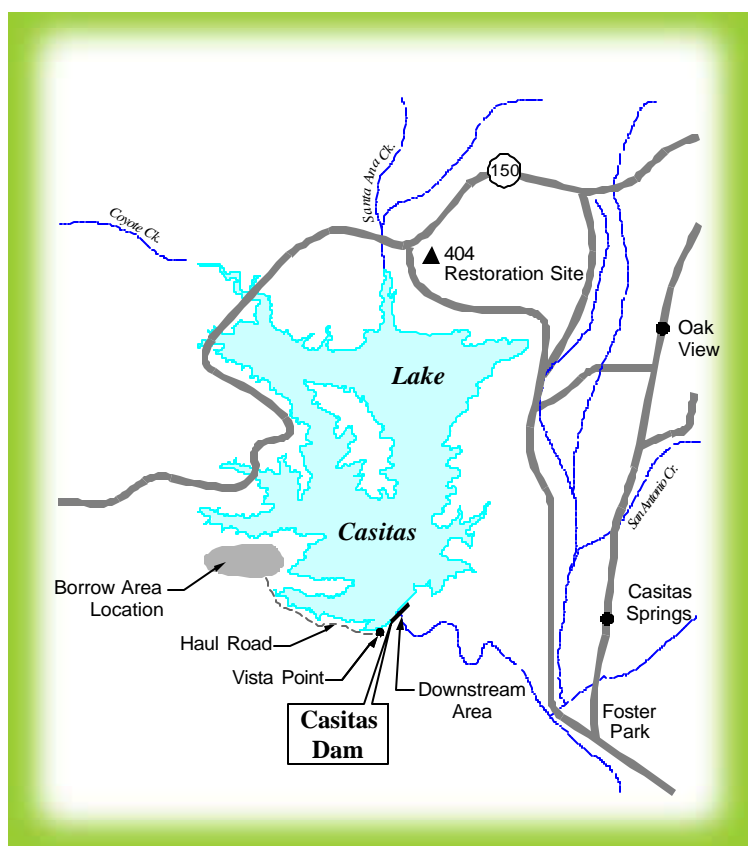
The Bureau of Reclamation is completing its work to upgrade Casitas Dam near Ventura to current earthquake safety standards as part of an ongoing agency-wide dam modernization effort. The work of widening the crest from 40 feet to 110 feet was finished in January,

and the new berm on the downstream face of the dam will be completed by the end of September. Environmental restoration is now under way to mitigate for impacts to environmental resources associated with project activities.

Did you know?

Casitas Dam is an earthfill structure 335 feet high and 2,000 feet long at the crest. The dam's spillway, located on the left abutment, is founded on rock along its entire length. It includes an 800-foot-long intake structure on the upstream face of the dam.

About 1.5 million cubic yards of earth and rock were excavated in the borrow area to build the berm and widen the crest of Casitas Dam -- enough material to fill 9,000 railroad box cars, which would create a stack of boxcars 30 deep, 11 long, and 27 layers high.



Casitas Dam Restoration Sites

Environmental Restoration Under Way

Wetland Restoration Site

When work began to upgrade Casitas Dam, an existing maintenance road was improved so that heavy-duty trucks could bring fill material from an area on the northwest side of the reservoir. Improvements involved building culverts and road beds across five intermittent drainages which impacted irregularly-occurring wetland areas. Under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, any jurisdictional waters, including wetlands, which are impacted by an activity, are required to be restored. A restoration area, located on Federal land just north of Lake Casitas, has been identified as an appropriate site to mitigate for the loss of these wetlands. In general, a seasonal wetland area (about 6 acres in size) will be created by repairing a breach in an abandoned irrigation pond and planting wetland plant species. This will allow for the development of appropriate hydrology, vegetation, and soils to support a wetland system.

Implementation of the wetland restoration site is scheduled to be completed at the end of this year, followed by a 3 to 5 year maintenance and monitoring program to ensure successful restoration.

Workers are now busy making the areas affected by the Casitas Dam upgrade project look green and natural. But that isn't happening by accident because environmental issues, including restoration, were at the forefront during project planning. By considering environmental factors up-front, impacts were minimized or avoided and future restoration efforts were reduced.

Before construction began, a pre-project vegetation survey was performed, documenting the levels and the types of vegetation and erosion control, air emissions, and fisheries plans, and protection and monitoring measures were developed. This information was used to plan for the avoidance or minimization of environmental impacts during construction. Based on those planning efforts, major stands of oak trees at the borrow site were avoided and overall impacts to vegetation, wildlife, air, soil, and water were minimized.

Restoration details and a schedule are under development, but the current general approach to restoration implementation is as follows:

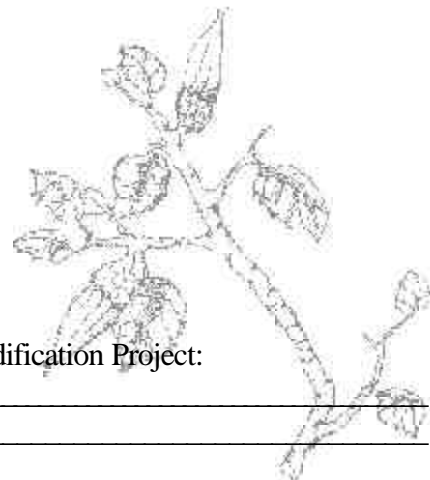
- Phase 1: At the close of construction, the construction contractor, using native species, will recontour and seed the areas impacted by construction to restore native grassland and shrub vegetation and to ensure stability throughout the winter months. This activity should be completed by the end of October to allow the vegetation to be established before the rainy season. Site conditions will be monitored through the fall of 2001.
- Phase 2: A comparison between pre- and post- project construction, primarily through use of aerial and biological surveys, will be performed to assess the overall environmental effects of the project. A restoration plan will then be prepared in early 2001 to augment and enhance the initial re-seeding efforts and installing various native tree and shrub species as container plants. To restore pre-project vegetation, native oaks will be planted near the dam. Oak and walnut woodlands, coastal sage shrub, and annual grasslands will be planted along the reservoir haul road, and coastal sage shrub, chaparral, and annual grasslands will be planted in the borrow area during the fall and winter of 2000. If necessary, additional seeding with native plants will be conducted to supplement the original seeding done in 2000. Restoration and mitigation areas will then be maintained and monitored for 3 to 5 years to help ensure successful revegetation of all project-affected areas.



We want to hear from you.

Mail to:

Marian Echeverria
Bureau of Reclamation
2800 Cottage Way, MP-140
Sacramento, California 95825-1898



Please provide us with your comments or questions regarding the Casitas Dam Modification Project:

☐ Yes, I will collect acorns and grow seedlings.

☐ Yes, I'm interested in a tour.

I prefer Saturday am _____ pm _____

My phone no. _____



ACORN PLANTING PROGRAM

The Bureau of Reclamation is collecting seeds from several native plant species, including Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) trees, at Lake Casitas this fall for use in the restoration of the dam site, borrow site, and haul road. The seeds and acorns will be planted in pots this winter, and seedlings will be maintained and planted at the project site in late 2001 to supplement the native plant seeding conducted in 2000.

Reclamation wants to give local residents the opportunity to play a part in this revegetation effort through an Acorn Planting Program. Interested individuals, families, and community groups can collect Coast Live Oak acorns this fall, plant them in pots, and care for the seedlings over the next year. The oak seedlings can then be brought to the project site in late 2001 to be planted along with other seedlings grown by Reclamation. There is no limit to the number of oak seedlings that you can produce for the project. For instructions, see insert.





Oak tree planting and care tips:

t Only acorns from Coast Live Oak trees should be collected. To recognize these trees, please refer to the illustrations in this newsletter. The tree's acorns generally mature during September and October. You may need to examine several trees before finding one that has acorns that are ready to be picked.

t Please collect acorns only from trees in the Ventura River watershed. Acorns should be picked from the tree or removed from the ground if they have fallen within the past several days. Acorns are ready to be picked when they are brown and easily removed from their "caps" without tearing. If acorns are slightly green when collected, try to twist the acorn out of its cap. If it comes out easily, without tearing, it has reached maturity. It's important to let green acorns season by drying them. Place them in a dry, room-temperature setting where they are well ventilated (in brown paper bags or on a screen). Don't use acorns with holes from insect damage or if they are shriveled or mushy.

t To plant your acorns, first cut the top off of an empty plastic milk jug and punch a hole in the bottom. Then fill with native soil and plant three acorns in the container with their tips pointed down. Cover the tops of the acorns with about 1/4-inch of soil, then water. Planting three acorns in each container ensures germination of at least one healthy plant. If more than one acorn germinates, remove the smaller plants after several weeks.

t Place the containers on patios, tables, or elsewhere in full or partial sun. Keep the soil moist at all times, but do not over-saturate making the soil soggy or dripping wet. Cover the plants with a cloth or place the pots under a patio roof if temperatures are expected to dip below freezing. Plants are less susceptible to freezing if leaves are kept moist.

t Put a plastic mesh or chicken wire covering over the pots if wood rats, mice, squirrels, raccoons, or birds might disturb the young oak plants. Once the seedlings have developed several leaves, the wire can be removed. Do not let the roots extend through the holes in the pots into the lawn or garden.

t If insects are attacking the plant, periodically spray the leaves with a mild soapy water solution to remove the pests.

t Finally, if you participate in the Acorn Planting Program, please be sure to fill out and return the response form located inside the back cover of this newsletter. That way we can notify you where to bring your seedlings next fall for planting by Reclamation's restoration contractor.

Casitas Dam Restoration Program



Q1. How does the Restoration Plan provide for continuity rather than a band-aid or piecemeal approach environmental restoration?

A1. This is a fully planned and phased process. While work being done at any one time may seem to be unrelated to the project, it is part of an ongoing process that will result in a fully-restored project area.

Q2. What measures taken by Reclamation and the Contractor were effective in preventing or mitigating impacts?

A2. Biologists, geologists, designers, and construction engineers worked together to develop a plan which would allow for the needed fill material to be taken from the borrow areas for the dam fix while minimizing the number of trees that would be impacted. This planning effort has proven to be effective in minimizing tree loss; in fact, less trees have been impacted at the borrow areas than were anticipated. Overall, the impacted environmental areas at the borrow areas, dam site, and haul road have been minimal, less than they were originally projected to be. Monthly environmental inspections were also performed to ensure that all work remained within predetermined limits and that environmental protection measures such as erosion control devices were functioning properly.

Q3. Were trees, grasses, and other plant samples saved from the impacted areas for reuse in the restoration?

A3. The contractor was required to strip grasses along with topsoil before excavation. The materials were stockpiled for future use in reclaiming the affected areas, so grasses are expected to sprout from the re-use of the topsoil. Also, all cleared vegetation, including trees and shrubs, was mulched and stockpiled for spreading in appropriate areas.

Q4. Are specimen trees replacing those removed from the impacted areas?

A4. It is very difficult and expensive to move large trees, so specimen trees were not used to replace trees removed from impacted areas.

Q5. What is the condition of the haul road? How will it be left?

A5. The steepest slopes along the road will be stabilized with earth berms and the graded road corridor will be reduced to a single traffic lane. The road's shoulders and all slopes will be seeded for erosion control.

Q6. How much truck traffic will there be on Casitas Vista Road during the restoration program?

A6. Truck traffic will take place on Casitas Vista Road, but it will not involve large vehicles. Traffic will be limited to a few pick-up size vehicles for short periods of time.

Mark Your Calendar...

Reclamation welcomes public participation in the Restoration Program. On October 26, a public meeting will be held to brief area residents and interested parties on the status of construction and the environmental restoration effort. The meeting is scheduled from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Casitas Springs Community Center, 8437 Edison Drive, Ventura. For information call ...916/978-5105